

- i f o k u S Celine Dion's mentor helps Norwegian Cecilia.



“Some have called me the best in the world, but that is not true. I'm only good with those I'm on the same wavelength with.”

Vocal coach William Riley

■ NEW YORK (VG) – Jaaohojaaohojaaaaohoho, trills bell-like from the small-framed body of Cecilia Knutsen.

- Faster, William Riley commands, one of the world's most respected vocal coaches.
- Jaajohojaaohojaaohoo! Cecilia answers.
- Why was that so difficult? she wonders.
- Use your nose more. Like that, yes! That's better than yesterday, Riley instructs.

In a crowded, chaotic studio, Cecilia is searching for the perfect voice, helped by the man who played a key role in making Bill Clinton president, and Celine Dion a super star.

William Riley has a ponytail, as long as his tie. Around him stand boxes and boxes of sheet music, a video camera, recording equipment, a small wooden stage and a black grand piano with a PC on top.

On the 17 feet high walls in the backyard studio in New York you find a lot of brass and wooden instruments, guitars, and yards of bookshelves filled with books.

Between the home studio and the kitchen stands an entire organ, with pipes and everything, under construction. The hallway is decorated with pictures and cards from opera stars, pop artists, and celebrities.

- This is the Christmas card from Celine Dion. Riley says, and shows a picture of the Canadian singer and her whole family with milk mustaches.

- Funnier than this one from Bill Clinton, he says and roars with laughter.

The Harstad girl Cecilie Knutsen – with the artist name Cecilia – has sold 300,000 albums abroad, but remained almost unknown in Norway. She staked everything and moved to Los Angeles. She came home broke and with a suitcase full of broken promises.



TRILLING NOTES: Cecilia Knutsen, with the artist name Cecilia, uses all her power to search for the healing voice. To help

- I gave up, and took a job at a health food store. It was OK, but not what I wanted. I decided to try one last time, she explains.

She contacted vocal coach William Riley in New York, and started the search for the perfect voice, to breath new life into her singing career. Now her new CD "The Healing Voice" is being released.

- I had not been singing for two years, and had to rebuild my voice again from scratch. Cecilia recalls.

- Riley has been invaluable and has meant everything to me. He makes me believe it is possible, even if it is incredibly hard work.

- Brrih! Puh! Puh! Brrooh! Puh! Puh! Brrooh! Puh! Puh! Braahh! Cecilia snorts on. Tiny droplets of perspiration from her forehead.

- Thanks, much better, Riley says.

The first thing he did when Cecilia came to him this summer was to send her to a personal trainer.

- You have to be in physically good shape to be able to carry a voice.

In a way I'm like a coach for someone who is entering the Olympics. It is not enough to say good luck, hard workouts are needed, every day, the vocal coach explains. He has worked with everyone from the rock band the Grateful Dead, Whitney Houston, Faith Hill, and the rapper Run DMC. Bill Clinton came to him in the middle of the election campaign.

- He had no voice left. The next five months until the election I traveled with him everywhere, and supervised that he used his voice correctly, got enough sleep and saved his voice. On the election night he embraced me, and said he could not have done it without me. That was powerful, Riley says.

With clients from all over the world he can choose whom he would like to work with.

- Some have called me the best in the world, but that is not true. I'm only good with those I'm on the same wavelength with, says Riley.

- Someone could be almost perfect, and only need a few adjustments, and some I'll pass on to others if I feel I cannot help them. Sometimes I'll ask them to come back in five years with hard work, as the case was for Celine Dion.

- Her parents came to me when she was 16 years old. I told them it would take five years before she was ready. They were shocked, and said they did not have the time.

But what we did was to create a program where she did not stop the touring, but managed, saved, and developed her voice, Riley tells.

- Before that she had to cancel concerts often, because her voice was tired.

Recommended by Luciano Pavarotti himself

på
for the Voice



“He makes me believe it is possible, even if it is incredibly hard work.”

Student Cecilia Knutsen

her, she has vocal coach William Riley, who has helped Celine Dion, the Grateful Dead and Bill Clinton to control their voices.

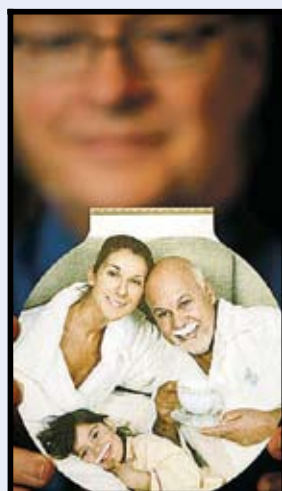
Foto: PONTUS HOOK



A-HA thanks: William Riley's wife Linda is also a vocal coach, and has worked with a-ha. A signed picture is hanging in the couple's hallway.

Foto: PONTUS HÖÖK

We had to put a guard outside her hotel room so she could get enough sleep, and reduce the hours she spoke on the phone.



Still, sixteen years later Riley decides exactly how much Celine Dion uses her voice, and how much she sleeps.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS: Christmas card to William Riley from Celine Dion shows her family with milk mustaches.

Foto: PONTUS HOOK

- But she loves to have a schedule and discipline, he explains.

- **Aaaaveeh Maaariaaaaah** – in exceeelsiis, rings in Latin from Cecilia. - Do you feel it in the nose? And does it vibrate in your ribs? The ending must have a punch! Riley admonishes.

Since this summer she has worked and practiced as hard as what Riley calls a master degree in voice practice. - It is not possible to do everything at once. Singers are not capable of handling more than three things at a time. We take the obvious first, what gives the best and fastest progress. Then we advance to the next level, Riley explains.

He first heard about Cecilia from the legendary Luciano Pavarotti.

- William Riley was a person I could only hope to get in touch with and my manager and I wondered how we could make it happen. We sent a CD and some

information to Pavarotti. He loved it, and the next day came a message that he would like to meet me, Cecilia says.

The same day Pavarotti coincidentally met with Riley in New York. - He mentioned her, and he said he liked her. So when she contacted me, I was curious. If it had not been for Pavarotti's recommendation, I would not have called back so quickly, William Riley admits.

They had two singing lessons together. Pavarotti became sick, and had to cancel the much spoken of concerts in New York – and his meeting with Cecilia. - I was very disappointed, she says.

Then started a two-year break for Cecilia.

- When I decided to try one more time, I sent a letter to five different sponsors. I received four noes and one yes. That meant I could connect again with Riley, and be able to release a new album. Now we have to see where it goes, Cecilia says.

William Riley believes in his student. - She is beautiful, and sings like an angel. If she uses all her resources, she can go far. I can help her to build on that, but then I have to send her out into the market. And that I cannot control, Riley says.

- That is the most difficult thing, to send them out there from the safe environment in the studio. On the outside there is no mercy.

- Puh, one thing is for sure, I learned something today too, Cecilia ascertains.



Kim Riseth